



Parent Involvement Policy

This plan incorporates requirements for Title I and was reviewed using the Parent Involvement Policy Checklist for Title I Schools.

The Governing Body and staff of Equipo Academy believe that the most powerful component of a college-preparatory charter school is the simple expectation that all families will be deeply involved in their children's education.

The educators who designed Equipo Academy previously worked on several programs within traditional school districts for which they were able to consistently invest all parents in the mission of the program. Through this experience, they determined that the keys to involving families rest on three core ideas.

Access to data. Parents cannot provide the necessary support to help their children to and through college without access to the same data teachers are seeing in the classroom. Beyond the traditional six-week progress reports and quarterly report cards, Equipo Academy proposes implementing an open-source, in-house communication system developed by East Las Vegas educators in partnership with professional computer programmers. The system, called ScholarBot, functions through any web browser on a computer or tablet and can also be accessed on any cellphone by SMS or web browser. When a parent logs in, they not only have access to summative course grades, assignments, and attendance data, they can also see real-time records of every merit and demerit a student has collected for the day along with a calendar of events, web form versions of informal school paperwork, surveys and goal-setting tools. Just as innovative schools have built curriculum teams around access to data, Equipo Academy intends to build parent teams around access to data. State-of-the-art encryption and controlled log-in access ensures compliance with FERPA and security of student data.

Parent-student advisory groups. Daily advisory meetings of 18 students who work together throughout their secondary educational journey are key to the character development inherent in Equipo Academy's mission. Students will meet in their advisories for 30 minutes daily and for a longer 55 minute block on Wednesdays and Thursdays. In regular meetings, after a daily character mini-lesson, they will strategize around goals they have set with their families from the previous weekend and update one another on their progress towards their goals. In the longer weekly block advisories, they will discuss the group's monthly book, which they are also expected to be discussing and, where possible, reading with their family.

What makes these advisories unique from traditional school advisory structures is that at the end of each month the advisory will host an evening gathering where parents of the students in the group will join them for a small group discussion of their children's goals. When eighteen families are brought together to discuss academics with their students' advisor, the feeling in the room is transformational. A sense of partnership extends through all levels of the team, and parents develop their own support networks beyond their classroom teacher. In implementing this advisory structure for previous projects, the educators behind Equipo Academy have seen parents develop deep friendships and become partners in their children's success.

Exceptional "customer service". Too often in education it is easy to take families and students for granted, especially in an educational landscape where options are limited. A message from a parent is lost on an administrator's desk, a student's disciplinary

proceedings are deferred to a higher-up administrator in another facility at another date, or a Spanish-speaking parent struggles to understand how their child can improve an Algebra grade at a school without accessible translators. Equipo Academy staff will commit to never falling into the trap of taking families for granted. Simply put, they will believe parents and families are too important to student success to ever let them fall through the cracks.

In 2012, two of Equipo Academy's founding educators piloted a training session for new staff modeled after the trainings required of new employees for the Four Seasons and Mandarin Oriental hotels. The simple objective of the training was to teach new teachers to approach families not as the people they turn to when a student is misbehaving, but to see parents as the most valuable members of their team — members worthy of world class service. If a parent asked a teacher something they did not know, the teacher was responsible for finding someone who could assist the parent and they were additionally responsible for following up later to ensure the issue was resolved. When a decision on a parent concern required administrative input, the teacher became the advocate for that family and guided them through the process. To prepare for parents who showed up and needed a translator, school leaders took the responsibility of calling in college interns to translate.

The results from families were some of the highest satisfaction ratings on parent surveys among the teachers who self-reported the greatest follow-through on the suggested strategies. Similar training will be provided to all Equipo Academy staff — from office support to classroom teachers — and quarterly family surveys will

specifically address parent satisfaction with the school and its programs to ensure trainings are effective.

As a Title I school, Equipo Academy has assumed additional responsibilities for parental involvement in order to provide students and families with access to additional resources from federal programs. In compliance with federal Title I Parent Involvement requirements and the Parent Involvement Policy Checklist for Title I Schools, the Governing Body and staff of Equipo Academy commit to the following parent involvement priorities.

Involvement in the Development and Revision of the Parental Involvement Plan.

While the initial Parent Involvement Policy was coauthored with members of the Committee to Form Equipo Academy and parents supporting the charter application, Equipo Academy staff further commit to involving parents in the joint revision and approval of all future iterations of this policy.

This involvement continues in the 2015-2016 school year with the review and approval of the entire policy at the school's November 24 Title I Meeting and family night. The date of the first year meeting was matched to first-year approval of Title I funding, but in subsequent years the parent involvement plan shall be approved at an annual meeting to be held no earlier than August 1 and no later than September 30 of each school year.

At each annual meeting, Equipo Academy shall provide opportunities for advanced input in writing from families unable to attend, and at least two meeting times shall be provided to accommodate parents with varying schedules. Staff may also choose to

offer a “make-up” meeting for parents to review the work of the annual meeting if they were unable to attend initially but would like access to the approved work.

To ensure all parents may fully participate in the meeting, Equipo Academy will provide a safe space for childcare of younger siblings at any and all parent meetings including the Annual Title I Meeting and monthly PTA meetings.

Involvement in the Development of School Improvement Plans. In addition to the involvement of families in the Annual Title I Meeting, families shall also be included in the development of the School Improvement Plan.

The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) shall select by a majority vote at least one parent to serve on the School Improvement Plan (SIP) team each year. This vote shall only include the votes of current parents and guardians and not other members of the PTA. This parent will be responsible for attending and engaging in all SIP meetings to devise the annual SIP, and will meet with other parents at least twice to gather feedback as the plan is finalized.

Building Parent Capacity. To support all families in becoming more involved in the school, Equipo Academy will conduct the following activities:

- bimonthly “Advisory Nights” to help families monitor their child’s progress, work with educators, and access materials from the school’s curriculum.

- quarterly “Department Nights” where a department (ie. the science department) leads a family event introducing parents and guardians to their content standards and assessments through engaging family activities
- ongoing “Good to Great” meetings where teams of teachers meet with parents of proficient and excelling students to brainstorm ways families can challenge their students further
- ongoing “Intervention” meetings where teachers partner with families to solve problems by fostering parental involvement, using technology as appropriate
- training for staff to conduct these meetings and events and to engage all families as equal partners with the school staff
- sending all information related to the school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities to families through multiple methods (e-mail, text, print, and/or phone invitation), in an understandable format and with translations as needed
- coordinating and integrating parent involvement programs wherever possible with other community programs including public preschool programs as the school grows
- working towards the development of a parent resource center to create a permanent space for resources and tools for all families

- providing any other reasonable support for parental involvement activities as parents may request